

Family Court

Quality Counts...Family Court...Counts Quality

Family Court continues on its quest to improve the quality of the services provided in each of our courthouses. From our "VOICES" survey in 1992 to our "Courting Quality" initiative commenced in 1996 and our development and publication of the Family Court Performance Standards in 1999, we have now arrived at another critical milestone in our quest to provide quality services to the citizens of the State of Delaware.

During Fiscal Year 2002, the Family Court focused much attention on the formulation and testing of performance "measures" for the Family Court Performance Standards as part of our "Quality Counts...Family Court...Counts Quality" program. The application of the performance measures will allow the Court, staff, litigants and the public to gauge our actual performance against those standards established in 1999.

With the assistance and support of Dr. Ingo Keilitz, a nationally recognized expert on Trial Court Performance Standards and Measures, the five performance measurement focus groups, under the guidance of the Quality Counts Leadership Committee, composed of court and community members, and with the continued financial assistance of the First State Quality Improvement Fund, have developed and validated twenty-one measures for final development and implementation.

At present Dr. Keilitz is working with the five focus group chairpersons to complete the



Chief Judge Vincent J. Poppiti

final draft of the Family Court Performance Standards and Measures document, which is scheduled for completion in October/November 2002. Early in 2003 we plan to republish the Family Court Performance Standards along with the measures for family courts nationally. Additionally, the document will be available on our web site.

Full implementation of the twenty-one performance measures is scheduled to commence in January 2003. Family Court will then utilize the information produced through the performance measurement process in order to adjust our policies, procedures and management practices in order to provide the quality of service the citizenry of our state deserve.

Family Court Programs for Self-Represented Litigants

Family Court's focus on quality has resulted in the development and implementation of several programs for self-represented litigants:

Family Court Resource Centers

Family Court continues to experience success from the operation of its Resource Centers. Furthermore, based on feedback from a variety of sources, implementation of Family Court's *pro se* program already has contributed to more efficient court operations, to enhancing the public's access to the court, enhancing litigants' participation in the court process and their meaningful right to be heard.

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Litigants gradually are being referred to the Resource and Self-Help Centers by state agencies, organizations, legislators, and even attorneys. Litigants continue to report to Family Court that they have benefited from having a wide range of resources available at a single location to help guide them through the legal process. Some litigants were particularly thankful to have visited the Centers because the resources helped them determine whether they were capable of representing themselves.

During Fiscal Year 2002, 23,582 individuals availed themselves of the services of the Family Court Resource Centers in Kent and Sussex Counties. If the New Castle County Courthouse Self-Help Center follows the experience in Kent and Sussex, another 23,000 – 30,000 visitors will be added to the total.

Staff reports that they spend significantly less time trying to assist self-represented litigants since the Resource Centers have opened. Communications with self-represented litigants are more succinct because the resources at the Centers supplement the information staff provides.

Judicial Officers report spending less time explaining the legal process during court hearings because litigants are appearing more prepared and/or because they can refer litigants having questions or requiring additional information to the Resource and Self-Help Centers.

The Self-Help Center

On September 3, 2002, the first Self-Help Center opened in New Castle County. A Center serving the needs of self-represented litigants of all of Delaware's State Courts, the Self-Help Center has as its model the Family Court Resource Centers and incorporates the philosophy and approach of Family Court's *pro se* program. Family Court staffs the Self-Help Center and the vast majority of users are Family Court litigants. It is estimated that the Self-Help Center assisted nearly 2,000 people during the first month of operations.

As more people learn of the Self-Help Center, we anticipate that the number of people served through the Self-Help Center will substantially increase.

The Pilot of the Attorneys Counseling Evening Program

As a result of implementation of Rule 6.5 of the Delaware Lawyers' Rules of Professional Responsibility (adopted November 2000), on May 23, 2002 at the Delaware State Bar Association in Wilmington, Family Court co-sponsored the first Attorney Counseling Evening Program (hereinafter referred to as the "ACE Program"). Other sponsors included the Supreme Court, Court of Chancery, Superior Court, Court of Common Pleas, Justice of the Peace Court, the Delaware State Bar Association, Delaware Volunteer Legal Services, Widener University School of Law, Legal Services Corporation of Delaware, and Community Aid Legal Society, Inc. Although not a sponsor, the Delaware Paralegal Association, assisted with staffing.

Modeled after the ACE Program in Contra Costa County, California, the Program entails attorneys providing free "fifteen-minute type" assistance to self-represented litigants. Litigants having low-income were screened for eligibility for free legal assistance by one of Delaware's legal service providers.

Filings Examiners

In 1999 the Delaware Supreme Court's special committee on Family Court Internal Operating Procedures recommended that the Family Court's filing process could be materially improved if legally trained personnel reviewed filings at the outset. In Fiscal Year 2001 the Family Court hired its first Filings Examiner. The position is unique in Delaware's courts and rare throughout the nation. The intent in developing the filings examiner concept was to reduce the frustration of the self-represented litigant who inadvertently or unwittingly filed inappropriate or insufficient documents with the court and waited sometimes months only to find out that the court could not proceed and that they must start over. The law-trained Filings Examiner position reviews all filings received by the court from the self-represented and promptly intercedes to expedite the return of the insufficient documents to the litigant so that the necessary corrections can be made early on and the process expedited. As a result, the litigant's time, as well as that of staff, is not wasted while the paperwork moves forward through what could be unnecessary processing.

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During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2002, the Filings Examiner reviewed approximately 1,540 civil filings presented by self-represented litigants. Of these, 524 petitions (34 percent of those filed) required corrective action. Therefore, 524 deficient petitions were either corrected or dismissed before they reached a court calendar.

Further, the work of the Filings Examiner helped to ensure that the remaining 1,016 *pro se* petitions, which went to scheduling without response, were ready for court action when calendared. This proactive effort by Family Court makes great strides in achieving what the committee called the most important aspect of Family Court work from the litigant's perspective, the "rendering of timely justice".

The Family Court has made great strides and has received substantial praise for our efforts on behalf of those citizens who represent themselves in Family Court.

The Family Court has also undertaken a number of other initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of our service to the citizenry of the State of Delaware:

Court Improvement Project

Background

The federal Family Preservation and Support Act provides multi-year Court Improvement Project (CIP) grants to state Supreme Courts to improve how courts within the state handle cases involving children in foster care, termination of parental rights, and adoption proceedings. The grants are administered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. The Delaware Supreme Court is participating in this program under the direction of Justice Randy J. Holland. Family Court oversight is provided by Associate Judge Kenneth M. Millman.

During the first phase of the project the court conducted a two-year assessment of its practices, outcomes, and relevant external relationships. The assessment concluded with twenty-two detailed recommendations for improvement. During the second phase of the project, a Court Improvement Project Implementation Steering Com-

mittee, chaired by Chief Judge Vincent J. Poppiti, provided consultation and guidance to the Court in its efforts to develop and execute the recommendations.

Reforms

The primary changes to handling child welfare cases, which have been implemented statewide are: one judge for the life of a case; a defined sequence of hearings for each case; and substantially increased representation for parents and children. Statutory changes have been made regarding termination of parental rights, guardianship, permanent guardianship, and guardian *ad litem*/Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). Other reforms in progress include data collection, use of case managers, revision of court rules that govern child welfare proceedings, court-focused training, and enhanced communication with the child welfare community.

Representation for Parents and Children

Eight contract attorneys provided representation for parents statewide. The state legislature provided some funds for contract positions, and the State Bar Foundation also provided funding. The court will continue to seek additional funding for these positions. Appointment of counsel for parents and CASA or attorney guardian *ad litem* for children has increased and now occurs early in the hearing process.

Data Collection

The current data system is being amended to enable tracking of court events through specific reports. New disposition codes for each stage of court proceeding have been implemented. Statewide data collection began July 1, 2001. Data elements, reports and exceptions have been identified, and reports for retrieving child welfare data are nearly completed.

Case Managers

Two case manager positions, originally funded through the CIP grant, have been incorporated into the Family Court budget. Two additional case managers were funded through the CIP grant in FY 2002. State funding was not approved for these positions for FY 2003, but the court has requested these positions in the FY 2004 budget.

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Court Rules

Proposed rules for child welfare cases have been drafted and have been approved by the Family Court Judiciary and Supreme Court. We anticipate that the rules will become effective December 2002.

Training

In 2001, interdisciplinary training sessions were organized and sponsored by the Court regarding child witnesses, ASFA and CIP changes and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The Court and child welfare agency collaborated on a full-day training for judicial officers, court staff, agency personnel, and other community stakeholders. A child welfare reference library has been provided to each judge.

In the last fiscal year, Family Court offered interdisciplinary training on Early Childhood and the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children and provided in-house training for its case managers and CASA Coordinators. Judicial secretaries and case managers were trained on new CIP disposition codes and their relevance to child welfare. The statewide Abuse Intervention Committee (CJA Task Force) is finalizing a contract with Prevent Child Abuse Delaware to manage a statewide training consortium on child welfare issues.

Communication

Sussex and New Castle County judges convene quarterly meetings with key stakeholders. Similar meetings have begun in Kent County, but are not routinely scheduled. The Chief Judge holds regular meetings with the Secretary for the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. Judges hearing child welfare cases have begun meeting on a regular basis to develop policies and strategies toward insuring children's best interests.

Next Steps

- ◆ Finalize data reports. Retrieve and analyze information collected since July 1, 2001.
- ◆ Finalize approval of revised rules (anticipated to be effective December 1, 2002).
- ◆ Explore resources for additional attorneys for parents and CASA. Renew budget request for case managers and attorneys for FY04.
- ◆ Monitor the status of the Strengthening Abuse Neglect Courts Act funding for CIP/ASFA im-

plementation, automation of data systems, training for judges and court staff, and expansion of CASA programs.

- ◆ Bring judges hearing child welfare cases together on a regular basis to compare experiences and to make decisions concerning unresolved strategic and policy issues.

Financial Management System

In May 2002 the Family Court implemented an automated financial management system in its collections offices, records rooms and *Pro Se* Centers. This system is modeled after the system currently in use in Justice of the Peace Court and the Court of Common Pleas. With the adoption of the Financial Management System (FMS), the Family Court is on the same technological level as the other courts and is in a position to accept branch-wide collections rather than restricting activities only to Family Court functions. As such, the collection resources of the judiciary will be broader in terms of knowledge, capabilities and the ability to server a larger portion of the citizenry of the State. Additionally, the Family Court will be in a position to proactively manage the accounts receivable in order to ensure that court orders are being honored.

Drug Court

In Fiscal Year 2002, Family Court completed a review of Drug Court best practices and designed a new Adjudicated Drug Court model. The proposed approach received Legislative endorsement with passage of a law that grants conditional licenses to misdemeanor participants, permits the vacating of their sentence once they have successfully completed the program and gives the Court authority to compel parents into assessment and treatment if indicated. In addition, treatment funding was provided by the Joint Finance Committee and will allow our partner in this endeavor, the Division of Child Mental Health, to act as the managed care organization for a host of treatment agencies.

FAMILY COURT



Front Row (left to right)

Associate Judge Barbara D. Crowell
Chief Judge Vincent J. Poppiti
Associate Judge Kenneth M. Millman

Second Row (left to right)

Associate Judge Mark D. Buckworth
Associate Judge Aida Waserstein
Associate Judge Mardi F. Pyott
Associate Judge Peter Jones

Third Row (left to right)

Associate Judge Chandlee Johnson Kuhn
Associate Judge William J. Walls, Jr.
Associate Judge William N. Nicholas

Fourth Row (left to right)

Associate Judge John E. Henriksen
Associate Judge Jay H. Conner
Associate Judge Alison Whitmer Tumas

Fifth Row (left to right)

Associate Judge William L. Chapman, Jr.
Associate Judge Robert B. Coonin

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Legal Authorization

The Family Court Act, Title 10, Chapter 9, Delaware Code, authorizes the Family Court.

Court History

The Family Court of the State of Delaware has its origin in the Juvenile Court for the city of Wilmington which was founded in 1911. A little over a decade later, in 1923, the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court for the city of Wilmington was extended to include New Castle County. In 1933, the Juvenile Court for Kent and Sussex Counties was created.

From the early 1930s, there was a campaign to establish a Family Court in the northernmost county, and this ideal was achieved in 1945 when the legislature created the Family Court for New Castle County, Delaware. In 1951, legislation was enacted to give the Juvenile Court for Kent and Sussex Counties jurisdiction over all family matters, and in early 1962, the name of the Juvenile Court for Kent and Sussex Counties was changed to the Family Court for Kent and Sussex counties.

As early as the 1950s, the concept of a statewide Family Court had been endorsed. The fruition of this concept as realized with the statutory authorization of the Family Court of the State of Delaware in 1971.

Geographic Organization

The Family Court is a unified statewide court with branches in New Castle County at Wilmington, Kent County at Dover, and Sussex County at Georgetown.

Legal Jurisdiction

The Family Court has had conferred upon it by the General Assembly jurisdiction over juvenile delinquency, child neglect, dependency, child abuse, adult misdemeanor crimes against juveniles, child and spouse support, paternity of children, custody and visitation of children, adoptions, terminations of parental rights, divorces and annulments, property divisions, specific enforcement of separation agreements, guardian-

ship over minors, imperiling the family relationship, orders of protection from abuse, and intrafamily misdemeanor crimes.

The Family Court does not have jurisdiction over adults charged with felonies or juveniles charged with first and second degree murder, rape, or kidnapping.

Cases are appealed to the Supreme Court with the exception of adult criminal cases which are appealed to the Superior Court.

Judges

Family Court has allowed 15 judges of equal judicial authority, one of whom is appointed by the Governor as chief judge and who is the chief administrative and executive officer for the Court. A bare majority of the judges must be of one major political party with the remainder of the other major political party.

The Governor nominates the judges, who must be confirmed by the Senate. The judges are appointed for 12-year terms. Judges must have been duly admitted to the practice of law before the Supreme Court of Delaware at least five years prior to appointment and must have a knowledge of the law and interest in and understanding of family and child problems. They shall not practice law during their tenure and may be reappointed.

Other Judicial Personnel

Family Court uses commissioners to hear specific types of cases. Commissioners are appointed for four-year terms by the Governor with the consent of a majority of the Senate.

Support Personnel

The Family Court has a staff of more than 290 persons in addition to judicial officers. The Court has a court administrator, directors, clerks of court, clerks, secretaries, typists, accountants, judicial assistants, mediation/arbitration officers, intake officers, program coordinators and volunteers working in all areas of the Court.

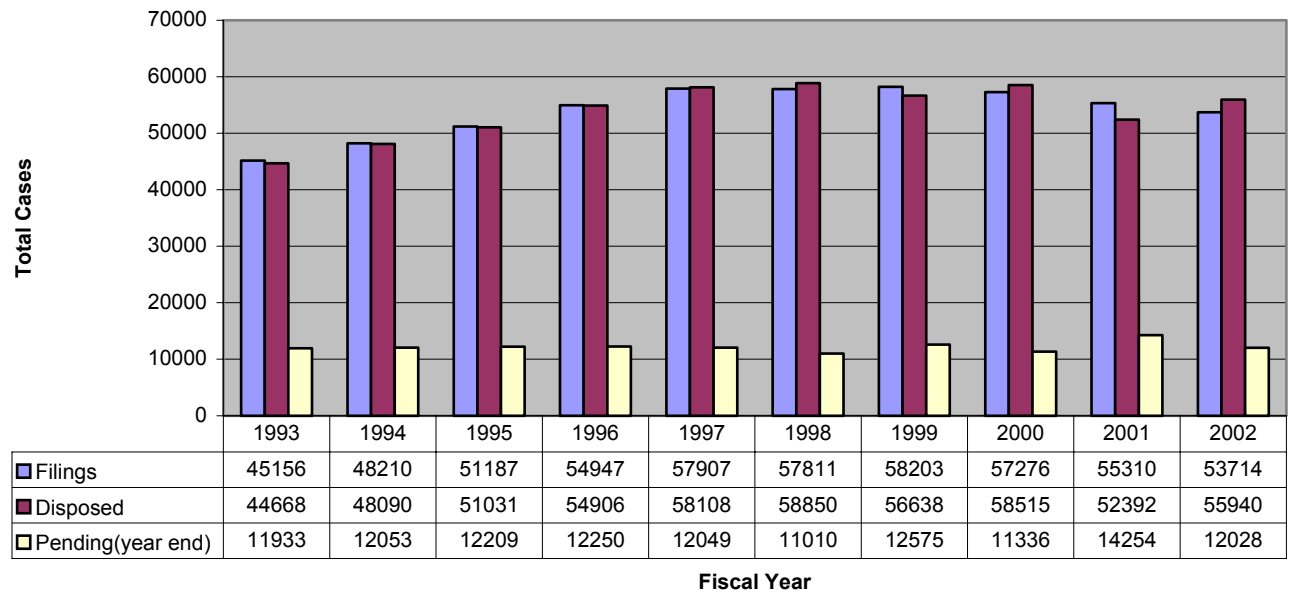
FAMILY COURT**Total Cases Explanatory Notes Fiscal Year 2002**

1. The unit of count in Family Court for adult criminal, juvenile delinquency, and civil cases is the filing.
2. A criminal or delinquency filing is defined as one incident filed against one individual. Each incident is counted separately so that multiple incidents brought before the Court on a single individual are counted as multiple charges.
 - a. A single criminal or delinquency filing may be comprised of a single or multiple charges relating to a single incident.
 - b. A criminal filing is received by the Court in the form of an information or a complaint, and a delinquency filing is received by the Court in the form of a petition or a complaint.
3. A civil filing is defined as a single civil incident filed with Family Court. A civil incident is initiated by a petition. In a divorce, although the petition may contain multiple ancillary matters to the divorce, it is counted as one filing.

Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2002 - Total Caseload						
	Pending 6/30/2001	Filed	Disposed	Pending 6/30/2002	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	8,090	31,793	32,759	7,124	- 966	-11.9%
Kent County	2,856	10,114	10,940	2,030	- 826	-28.9%
Sussex County	3,308	11,807	12,241	2,874	- 434	-13.1%
State	14,254	53,714	55,940	12,028	-2,226	-15.6%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Total Cases Filed						
	2001	2002		Change	% Change	
New Castle County	32,846	31,793		-1,053	-3.2%	
Kent County	10,769	10,114		- 655	-6.1%	
Sussex County	11,695	11,807		+ 112	+1.0%	
State	55,310	53,714		-1,596	-2.9%	
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Total Cases Disposed						
	2001	2002		Change	% Change	
New Castle County	30,716	32,759		+2,043	+6.7%	
Kent County	10,186	10,940		+ 754	+7.4%	
Sussex County	11,490	12,241		+ 751	+6.5%	
State	52,392	55,940		+3,548	+6.8%	

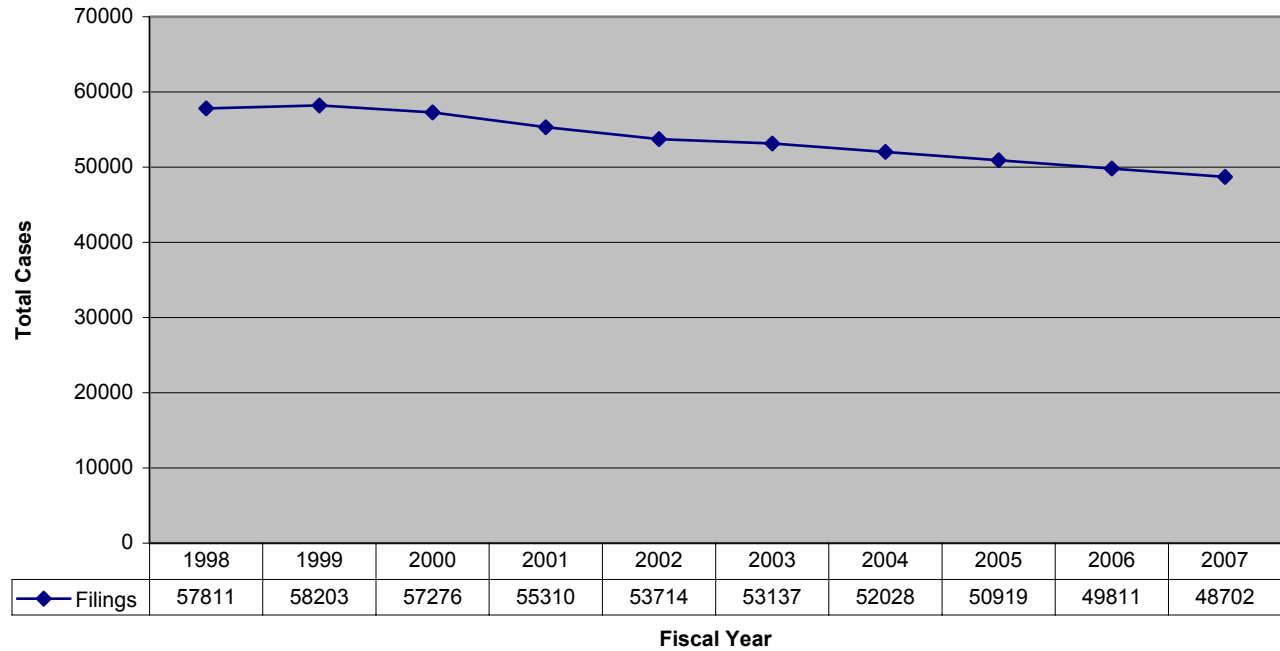
Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

Family Court 10 Year Caseload Trend Total Cases

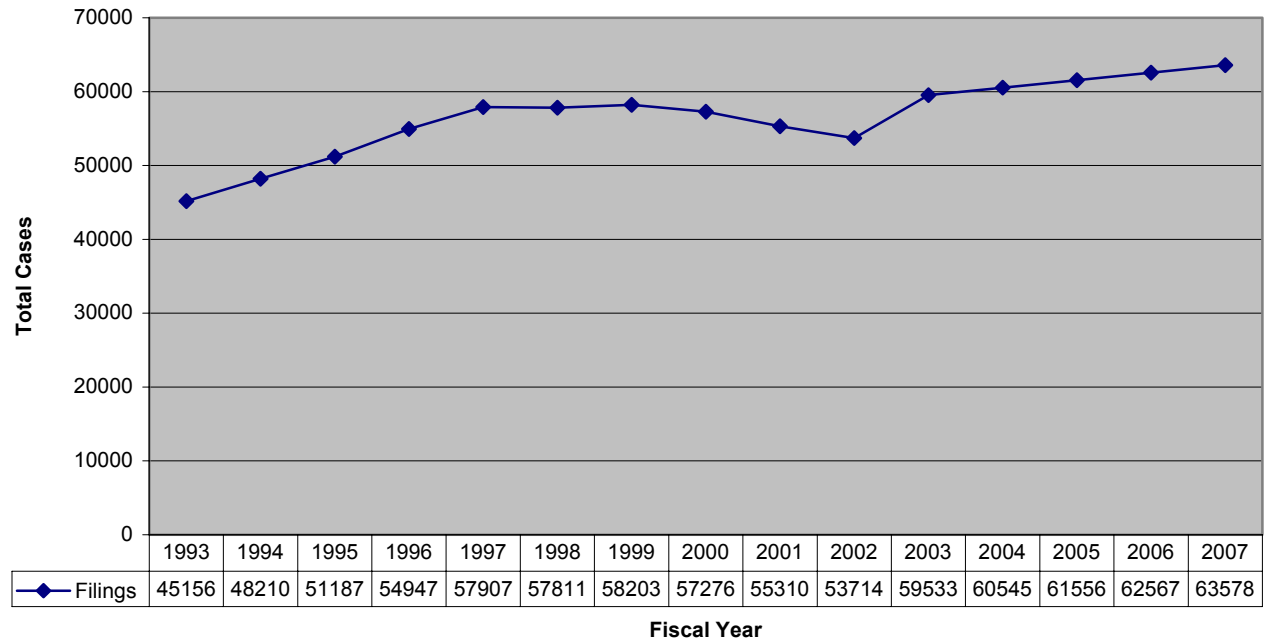


Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

5 Year Projections Family Total Using 5 Year Base



5 Year Projections Family Total Using 10 Year Base



Trend lines computed by linear regression.

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT						
Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2002 - Adult Criminal Cases						
	Pending 6/30/2001	Filed	Disposed	Pending 6/30/2002	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	885	3,352	3,379	858	-27	-3.1%
Kent County	92	982	974	100	+ 8	+8.7%
Sussex County	126	1,044	1,035	135	+ 9	+7.1%
State	1,103	5,378	5,388	1,093	-10	-0.9%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Adult Criminal Cases Filed						
	2001	2002	Change		% Change	
New Castle County	3,453	3,352	-101		-2.9%	
Kent County	1,029	982	- 47		-4.6%	
Sussex County	1,084	1,044	- 40		-3.7%	
State	5,566	5,378	-188		-3.4%	
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Adult Criminal Cases Disposed						
	2001	2002	Change		% Change	
New Castle County	3,218	3,379	+161		+ 5.0%	
Kent County	1,033	974	- 59		- 5.7%	
Sussex County	1,193	1,035	-158		-13.2%	
State	5,444	5,388	- 56		- 1.0%	

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT						
Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases						
	Pending			Pending	Change	% Change
	6/30/2001	Filed	Disposed	6/30/2002	In Pending	In Pending
New Castle County	1,929	5,742	6,214	1,457	-472	-24.5%
Kent County	367	1,670	1,860	177	-190	-51.8%
Sussex County	265	1,908	1,907	266	+ 1	+ 0.4%
State	2,561	9,320	9,981	1,900	-661	-25.8%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Filed						
	2001		2002		Change	% Change
New Castle County	5,926		5,742		-184	-3.1%
Kent County	1,819		1,670		-149	-8.2%
Sussex County	1,983		1,908		- 75	-3.8%
State	9,728		9,320		-408	-4.2%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Disposed						
	2001		2002		Change	% Change
New Castle County	5,254		6,214		+960	+18.3%
Kent County	1,831		1,860		+ 29	+ 1.6%
Sussex County	2,194		1,907		-287	-13.1%
State	9,279		9,981		+702	+ 7.6%

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT								
Caseload Breakdowns Fiscal Year 2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Filed								
	Felony		Misdemeanor		Traffic		Total	
New Castle County	1,140	19.9%	4,126	71.9%	476	8.3%	5,742	100.0%
Kent County	309	18.5%	1,201	71.9%	160	9.6%	1,670	100.0%
Sussex County	298	15.6%	1,340	70.2%	270	14.2%	1,908	100.0%
State	1,747	18.7%	6,667	71.5%	906	9.7%	9,320	100.0%
Caseload Breakdowns Fiscal Year 2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Disposed								
	Felony		Misdemeanor		Traffic		Total	
New Castle County	1,407	22.6%	4,400	70.8%	407	6.5%	6,214	100.0%
Kent County	379	20.4%	1,319	70.9%	162	8.7%	1,860	100.0%
Sussex County	280	14.7%	1,358	71.2%	269	14.1%	1,907	100.0%
State	2,066	20.7%	7,077	70.9%	838	8.4%	9,981	100.0%
Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Pending at End of Year								
	Felony		Misdemeanor		Traffic		Total	
New Castle County	181	12.4%	1,136	78.0%	140	9.6%	1,457	100.0%
Kent County	52	29.4%	118	66.7%	7	4.0%	177	100.0%
Sussex County	83	31.2%	162	60.9%	21	7.9%	266	100.0%
State	316	16.6%	1,416	74.5%	168	8.8%	1,900	100.0%
Caseload Breakdowns Fiscal Year 2002 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Change in Pending								
	Felony		Misdemeanor		Traffic		Total	
New Castle County	-267		-274		+69		-472	
Kent County	- 70		-118		- 2		-190	
Sussex County	+ 18		- 18		+ 1		+ 1	
State	-319		-410		+68		-661	

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT						
Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2002 - Civil Cases						
	Pending			Pending	Change	% Change
	6/30/2001	Filed	Disposed	6/30/2002	In Pending	In Pending
New Castle County	5,276	22,699	23,166	4,809	- 467	- 8.9%
Kent County	2,397	7,462	8,106	1,753	- 644	-26.9%
Sussex County	2,917	8,855	9,299	2,473	- 444	-15.2%
State	10,590	39,016	40,571	9,035	-1,555	-14.7%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Civil Cases Filed						
	2001		2002		Change	% Change
New Castle County	23,467		22,699		- 768	-3.3%
Kent County	7,921		7,462		- 459	-5.8%
Sussex County	8,628		8,855		+ 227	+2.6%
State	40,016		39,016		-1,000	-2.5%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Civil Cases Disposed						
	2001		2002		Change	% Change
New Castle County	22,244		23,166		+ 922	+ 4.1%
Kent County	7,322		8,106		+ 784	+10.7%
Sussex County	8,103		9,299		+1,196	+14.8%
State	37,669		40,571		+2,902	+ 7.7%

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT												
Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2002 - Civil Cases Filed												
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody						
New Castle County	2,114	9.3%	792	3.5%	2,969	13.1%	4,578	20.2%	2,110	9.3%	2,498	11.0%
Kent County	811	10.9%	215	2.9%	1,023	13.7%	1,257	16.8%	595	8.0%	886	11.9%
Sussex County	786	8.9%	122	1.4%	1,480	16.7%	2,350	26.5%	849	9.6%	860	9.7%
State	3,711	9.5%	1,129	2.9%	5,472	14.0%	8,185	21.0%	3,554	9.1%	4,244	10.9%
	Visitation	Protection From Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total						
New Castle County	656	2.9%	1,869	8.2%	190	0.8%	140	0.6%	4,783	21.1%	22,699	100.0%
Kent County	250	3.4%	713	9.6%	51	0.7%	22	0.3%	1,639	22.0%	7,462	100.0%
Sussex County	229	2.6%	726	8.2%	35	0.4%	16	0.2%	1,402	15.8%	8,855	100.0%
State	1,135	2.9%	3,308	8.5%	276	0.7%	178	0.5%	7,824	20.1%	39,016	100.0%
Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2002 - Civil Cases Disposed												
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody						
New Castle County	1,831	7.9%	806	3.5%	2,581	11.1%	5,453	23.5%	2,361	10.2%	2,629	11.3%
Kent County	744	9.2%	208	2.6%	1,092	13.5%	1,974	24.4%	609	7.5%	850	10.5%
Sussex County	751	8.1%	157	1.7%	1,512	16.3%	2,747	29.5%	882	9.5%	863	9.3%
State	3,326	8.2%	1,171	2.9%	5,185	12.8%	10,174	25.1%	3,852	9.5%	4,342	10.7%
	Visitation	Protection From Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total						
New Castle County	710	3.1%	1,794	7.7%	175	0.8%	151	0.7%	4,675	20.2%	23,166	100.0%
Kent County	237	2.9%	704	8.7%	32	0.4%	7	0.1%	1,649	20.3%	8,106	100.0%
Sussex County	243	2.6%	729	7.8%	54	0.6%	40	0.4%	1,321	14.2%	9,299	100.0%
State	1,190	2.9%	3,227	8.0%	261	0.6%	198	0.5%	7,645	18.8%	40,571	100.0%

RTSC = Rules to Show Cause

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT												
Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2002 - Civil Cases Pending at End of Year												
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody						
New Castle County	619	12.9%	202	4.2%	825	17.2%	797	16.6%	383	8.0%	546	11.4%
Kent County	287	16.4%	66	3.8%	220	12.5%	189	10.8%	133	7.6%	256	14.6%
Sussex County	299	12.1%	45	1.8%	414	16.7%	851	34.4%	147	5.9%	234	9.5%
State	1,205	13.3%	313	3.5%	1,459	16.1%	1,837	20.3%	663	7.3%	1,036	11.5%
	Visitation	Protection From Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total						
New Castle County	156	3.2%	111	2.3%	59	1.2%	93	1.9%	1,018	21.2%	4,809	100.0%
Kent County	79	4.5%	20	1.1%	30	1.7%	50	2.9%	423	24.1%	1,753	100.0%
Sussex County	84	3.4%	31	1.3%	7	0.3%	15	0.6%	346	14.0%	2,473	100.0%
State	319	3.5%	162	1.8%	96	1.1%	158	1.7%	1,787	19.8%	9,035	100.0%
Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2002 - Civil Cases Change in Pending												
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody						
New Castle County	+283	-14	+388	- 875	-251	-131						
Kent County	+ 67	+ 7	- 69	- 717	- 14	+ 36						
Sussex County	+ 35	-35	- 32	- 397	- 33	- 3						
State	+385	-42	+287	-1,989	-298	- 98						
	Visitation	Protection From Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total						
New Castle County	-54	+75	+15	-11	+ 108	- 467						
Kent County	+13	+ 9	+19	+15	- 10	- 644						
Sussex County	-14	- 3	-19	-24	+ 81	- 444						
State	-55	+81	+15	-20	+179	-1,555						

RTSC = Rules to Show Cause

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

FAMILY COURT**Mediation Explanatory Notes Fiscal Year 2002**

1. Mediation is a proceeding prior to adjudication in which a trained mediator attempts to assist the parties in reaching an agreement in disputes which involve child custody, support, visitation, guardianships, imperiling family relations, and rules to show cause. Mediation is mandatory in child custody, visitation, and support matters.
2. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement, the matter is scheduled to be heard before a commissioner or a judge.

Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2002 - Mediation						
	Pending 6/30/2001	Filed	Disposed	Pending 6/30/2002	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	104	9,135	9,119	120	16	15.4%
Kent County	196	2,535	2,444	287	91	46.4%
Sussex County	238	3,627	3,865	0	-238	-100.0%
State	538	15,297	15,428	407	-131	-24.3%
Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Mediation Filed						
	2001	2002		Change	% Change	
New Castle County	8,214	9,135		921	11.2%	
Kent County	2,837	2,535		-302	-10.6%	
Sussex County	3,263	3,627		364	11.2%	
State	14,314	15,297		983	6.9%	
Caseload Comparisons - Fiscal Years 2001-2002 - Mediation Disposed						
	2001	2002		Change	% Change	
New Castle County	8,212	9,119		907	11.0%	
Kent County	2,846	2,444		-402	-14.1%	
Sussex County	3,273	3,865		592	18.1%	
State	14,331	15,428		1097	7.7%	

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.